

# Five Ways to Keep Girls in School

(USAID)



Educating girls is important. The U.S. Agency for International Development says children born to [educated mothers](#) are twice as likely to survive past age 5. In the last decade, there's been a remarkable increase in the number of girls in developing countries attending primary school. But there's also been a remarkable drop-off in the number of adolescent girls who continue their education. While 87 percent enroll in primary school, only 39 percent graduate from secondary school.

Here are five ways to help girls realize their full potential through education.

## **Put schools where girls can get to them**

(USAID)



In rural areas, schools are often far from girls' homes. Research in Nigeria and Kenya has demonstrated that as the distance a girl has to travel to school increases, the likelihood of that student missing school or dropping out altogether increases too.

## **Keep girls in school safe**

(USAID)



When girls have to travel long distances to school, they are vulnerable to attack and harassment. In cultures that discourage education for women, girls are subjected to persecution, violence and intimidation in and around the classroom. Communities that work to ensure girls' safety at school improve girls' educational outcomes.

## **Train teachers to be gender aware**

(USAID)



Sometimes teachers and textbooks reinforce the idea that girls are less intelligent than boys or only show girls and women as household workers and caregivers. Teachers trained to counteract these stereotypes can help girls discover the opportunities education creates for them. Having a significant number of female teachers also helps to fight discrimination against girls and provides role models for female students.

## **Ease the workload of girls at home**

(USAID)



Household work such as carrying water, preparing food and washing clothes falls disproportionately

to girls and women throughout the developing world. It is the primary reason girls are kept home from school. Spreading the burden of chores across all members of the family helps girls succeed.

### **Get rid of obstacles that keep girls out of school**

(USAID)



In many developing nations, especially in rural areas, girls don't attend school during menstruation because they don't have access to sanitary pads or running water. In Uganda, the female speaker of parliament has led a campaign to make sanitary pads more widely available to keep girls in school.

To learn more about the importance of girls' education, take the newest YALI Network Online Course, "[Understanding Human Rights of Women and Girls](#)."

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## **Early Challenges Inspire Later Success**

Entrepreneur and community volunteer Christopher Asego credits the challenges of growing up in a slum as inspiration for wanting to help end poverty.

"The world has lots of problems. People who live them every day have the best solutions," he says on his Facebook page.

In June, Asego, a YALI Network member, spent two weeks in Chicago and Washington learning how innovators and entrepreneurs in the United States tackle their common business challenges. His visit was sponsored by the Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) initiative and included young entrepreneurs from Kenya, Uganda, Jordan, Tunisia, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Growing up, Asego attended an overcrowded school in Nairobi's Kibera area. Too shy to question his teacher when he didn't understand something, he lagged behind his classmates. "Not every child can learn in the same way at the same speed," he said.

But Asego had an advantage. His mother was a teacher and stuck by her son until he graduated from secondary school. "Not every child is as lucky as I was. ... A lot of children who experience early failure in school end up dropping out," he said.

Now 27, Asego went on to graduate from Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. He partnered with two peers to create Eneza Education, a firm that serves as a mobile phone-based tutor and teacher's assistant. Eneza, which means "to reach" or "to spread," aims "to make 50 million kids across Africa smarter," according to the company's website.

Asego said he will take what he learned in the United States back to his community and company.

He especially wants to share his knowledge with “up-and-coming entrepreneurs” who face the challenges of getting a business off the ground. “Back home, when you approach an investor, they want to see traction — traction you don’t have because you are just a startup,” he said.

Aside from his business, Asego volunteers to help eradicate jiggers from his community. Jiggers are tropical parasitic insects that “affect the interiors of the toes of children when they walk barefoot,” Asego said. With other volunteers involved in the nationwide effort to eradicate jiggers from Kenya by 2015, Asego goes house-to-house to wash children’s feet with a disinfectant.

“I have developed some kind of attachment to the slum because I grew up there,” he said.

**Photo credit: Christopher Asego**

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